

**Agenda Item C2**  
**Essex Officers' Report**  
**Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority**  
**Quarterly report: Period ending 31 March 2016**

**GENERAL SITUATION**

In addition to poor weather conditions in January which limited fishing opportunities, there was a poor show of codling at the start of the period which improved to fair by the end. However, it was noted that larger fish were scarcely seen for a second year running along much the Essex coast. Large shoals of larger herring dominated unwanted bycatches along with large quantities of Thornbacks for which there was still no increase in quota.

The complete closure on bass for all commercial vessels in February and March meant that some vessels only did limited trips where they quickly took their skate and sole quota allowances. General consensus from the industry was that while there were fish in the greater Thames to be caught, limitations on quota and new catch restrictions on bass resulted in generally poor landings across Essex in this period. Going into the next period, vessels in Essex will still be restricted in how they target bass with catch allowances for fixed netting and bycatch allowances for trawling but a continued ban on using drift gear.

**HARWICH & WALTON**

Drifting for cod reported fair to poor catches of codling throughout the period, however, poor weather conditions and a limit on the amount of thornback ray vessels were allowed to land meant some vessels chose to stay in port for long periods in January and well into February. Effort on lobsters was very low, with most vessels in this fishery not leaving port for most of the period.

*Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 8*

**BRIGHTLINGSEA, WIVENHOE, CLACTON**

Due to poor weather conditions and poor numbers of cod present at the start of the period, fishing effort from these ports was relatively low. Thornbacks were again seen in abundance but with limited quota only selected fish were retained. Large herring were also caught in drift gear during this period but most was unwanted due to a lack of market. Due to limitations on Bass and poor weather conditions only 2 vessels from these ports worked full time during this period.

*Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 5*

## **WEST MERSEA & TOLLESBURY**

Similar quantities of herring were seen by vessels from these ports as those in Brightlingsea, Clacton and Wivenhoe. Hand gathering of wild pacific rock oysters, at low tide, continued while the native oyster fishery remained closed. Trawlers targeting cod had fair catches of codling at times, however catches of larger cod were poor. The low quota allowance for thornback rays and sole was the limiting factor on catches from these fisheries during the period and the ban on bass in February and March was also seen to have significant effect on landings into the port compared to the same period in previous years due to the large number of vessels targeting fish by drift netting.

*Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 20*

## **MALDON & BRADWELL**

Fishing effort from these ports was mostly on private grounds for oysters. Vessels harvesting pacific oysters continued to work at levels seen during the same period in 2014 with restrictions on the movement of oysters still in effect. Very low levels of drift netting for cod occurred.

*Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 2*

## **NORTH FAMBRIDGE, BURNHAM-ON-CROUCH, BARLING, PAGLESHAM & ROCHFORD**

Only a low level of activity was again seen from these ports. Dredging for clams in the Crouch and Roach rivers has continued throughout this period at low to fair levels of intensity. Activity was mostly centred around private grounds for native and pacific oyster production.

*Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 6*

## **SOUTHEND-ON-SEA & LEIGH-ON-SEA**

The Authority's management of the cockle fishery resulted in the fishery remaining closed throughout this quarter. Most cockle vessels underwent routine maintenance during this period while some went on to other fisheries including whelks and working private grounds for other shellfish. Low quotas for sole and thornback limited fishing effort. Pair trawling for herrings and sprats occurred with fair to good landings of large herring being noted. However, it was noted that the sprat fishery was poor during this period. Trawlers from these ports mostly worked away during this period noting a poor show of cod.

*Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 26*

## **HOLEHAVEN & THURROCK**

Fishing effort was low from these ports, with only a small number of vessels working on a mostly part time basis. Activity from these ports has continued to reduce.

*Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 3*

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